



The President's Daily Brief

23 MAY 1971

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*Sunday Cable
23 May 71*

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HEREWITH PDB FOR 23 MAY:

INDIA - PAKISTAN

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THESE INCIDENTS OCCURRED IN AN AREA WHERE CROSS-BORDER
FIREFIGHTS HAVE BEEN NOTED FREQUENTLY SINCE THE TROUBLE
IN EAST PAKISTAN BEGAN IN MARCH.

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PRESIDENT YAHYA'S STATEMENT ON 21 MAY REGARDING THE EAST
PAKISTANI REFUGEES (NOW NUMBERING ABOUT 3,300,000) IS
LIKELY TO BE OF LITTLE HELP IN LOWERING SUCH TENSIONS.
ALTHOUGH HE ACKNOWLEDGED FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT LARGE
NUMBERS OF "INNOCENT PERSONS" IN ADDITION TO "MISCREANTS
AND INFILTRATORS" HAD FLED THE EAST AND SOUGHT SHELTER
IN INDIA, HE PUT MUCH OF THE BLAME FOR THIS EXODUS ON
INDIAN BLANDISHMENTS AND INTERFERENCE. IT IS ALSO UNLIKELY
THAT YAHYA'S CLAIMS THAT CONDITIONS IN THE EAST ARE RETURNING
TO NORMAL AND HIS PROMISES OF AMNESTY TO "LAW-ABIDING
CITIZENS OF PAKISTAN" WILL DO MUCH TO STEM THE FLOW OR
ENCOURAGE THE RETURN EITHER OF BANGLA DESH SUPPORTERS
OR OF HINDUS (ALMOST 66 PERCENT OF THE REFUGEES) WHO FEAR
THAT ISLAMABAD INTENDS TO EXPEL ALL NON-MUSLIMS FROM ITS
EASTERN WING.

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LAOS

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COMMUNIST FORCES IN THE CENTRAL PANHANDLE CONTINUED TO BE ACTIVE YESTERDAY, MAKING FURTHER ATTACKS ON GOVERNMENT BLOCKING POSITIONS NORTH, WEST, AND SOUTH OF DOUG MEINE, THE TOWN ON ROUTE 9 THAT FELL TO THE COMMUNISTS ON 17 MAY. SOME OF THE GOVERNMENT IRREGULARS NORTH AND NORTHWEST OF THE TOWN HAVE SINCE ABANDONED THEIR POSITIONS AND MOVED TOWARD ROUTE 9.

FARTHER SOUTH, ON THE BOLOVENS PLATEAU, THE GOVERNMENT IRREGULAR TASK FORCE TRYING TO SECURE HIGH GROUND AROUND THE COMMUNIST-HELD TOWN OF PAKSONG HAS NOW BEGUN TO ENCOUNTER TOUGHER RESISTANCE. A FEW MILES TO THE WEST OF PAKSONG ON ROUTE 23 HOWEVER, LAO ARMY UNITS SUCCEEDED IN REOCCUPYING A VILLAGE THAT HAD FALLEN TO THE COMMUNISTS.

ALTHOUGH THERE IS STILL NO EVIDENCE THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES ON THE BOLOVENS ARE PREPARING ANY IMMINENT MOVE AGAINST THE MERONG RIVER TOWN OF PAKSE, TWO NORTH VIETNAMESE COMPANIES WERE REPORTEDLY SPOTTED ABOUT 15 MILES NORTH OF PAKSE ON 20 MAY NEAR A DAM THAT PROVIDES THE SOURCE OF THE CITY'S ELECTRIC POWER. ACCORDING TO THE US EMBASSY IN VIENTIANE, THERE CONTINUES TO BE CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION AND ALARM IN PAKSE, INCLUDING AN EXODUS OF KEY CIVILIANS, AN INFLUX OF REFUGEES FROM THE FIGHTING TO THE EAST, AND SHARP PRICE INCREASES.

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IN NORTHERN LAOS, GROUND ACTION AROUND LONG TIENG, REMAINS AT A LOW LEVEL, AND THERE IS EVIDENCE FROM INTERCEPTS THAT ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE 31ST DIVISION HAVE PULLED BACK FROM THE AREA AND ONTO THE PLAINES DES JARRES. AROUND THE ROYAL CAPITAL OF LUANG PRABANG, THERE CONTINUES TO BE A LULL IN COMMUNIST ACTIVITY AND GOVERNMENT COMMANDERS BELIEVE THAT ENEMY FORCES NORTHEAST OF THE CITY HAVE MOVED BACK TO MORE SECURE AREAS. GOVERNMENT TROOPS HAVE NOW REOCCUPIED ALL OF THE TERRITORY THEY LOST DURING THE NORTH VIETNAMESE OFFENSIVE AROUND LUANG PRABANG THAT WAS LAUNCHED ON 20-21 MARCH.

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